



Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

Doctrinal Catechesis Sessions for adults based on
the Church Year, the Liturgy, & the Sunday Scriptures

Breaking Open the Word

by Mary Birmingham

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time | Year C



Fyodor Zubov, **1660**: *Ministry of the Apostles*, a complex multi-figure icon with a full-height image of Jesus Christ, surrounded by sectors with scenes of His disciples' calling, ministry and martyrdom.
Icon from the Yaroslavl Museum Preserve.



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Option 1. Use Opening Prayer from the Sunday Liturgy.

Option 2.

Oblatio Sui

*Lord, take all my freedom.
Accept my memory,
my understanding,
And my entire will.
You have given me all that I have or hold dear.
I return it to you,
that it may be governed by your will.
Give me only your grace
and the gift of loving you,
And I will be rich enough;
I will ask for nothing more.
Amen.*

Catholic
**Faith, Life
& Creed**
Version 2.0

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Breaking Open the
Word worksheets
connect with *Catholic
Faith, Life, & Creed*
Doctrinal Sessions.

Editor: Bill Huebsch

Published cooperatively by
TeamRCIA.com and
PastoralPlanning.com.

Liturgical Context

- ▶ Today's liturgy exhorts us to take up our cross and follow Jesus.
- ▶ Jesus sends out the seventy-two; he sends them on a mission to proclaim the Good News. That same missionary mandate is given to us today.
- ▶ The liturgy sends us out to love and serve the Lord.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of two, and then surface insights in the wider group.

- ▶ What spoke to your heart in today's liturgy?
- ▶ What reading, symbol, music, homily, spoke to you and why did it speak to you?
- ▶ What touched you the most in today's Gospel?

If time is a consideration, omit reflection on one of the readings.

Reading 1: Isaiah 66: 10-14

- ▶ It is difficult to immediately discern the connection between this reading and the Gospel.
- ▶ It is assumed that the term "prosperity like a river" in this reading is associated with the peace offered in the Gospel.
- ▶ Second Isaiah [40-55] reaches out to the people in Babylonian captivity.
- ▶ Third Isaiah [55-66] speaks to those who have returned from captivity and seek to rebuild their lives and their Jewish identity.
- ▶ Reality had set in for those who returned from exile. The much anticipated, idealized return was not what they had expected. There were controversies among the people. The exiled returnees—the elders, educated, wealthy and religious class wanted a return to strict Jewish observance and way of life.
- ▶ Those who were not exiled but remained in Israel—the middle, lower working class--assimilated into the pagan culture and had no intention of returning to the strict pre-exilic religious observances.
- ▶ Third Isaiah reassured the faithful orthodox remnant by appealing to the suffering servant who dies for the many and comparing the lives of the faithful remnant with the suffering servant.
- ▶ Third Isaiah raises hope for a future new day.
- ▶ He speaks of hope for life after death and belief in the final Messianic age.



Mystagogy reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two, and then surface brief insights in the wider group. Catechist responds with a "brief" story from his or her life. See appendix #1 for an example.

- ▶ Put yourself in the place of the returning exiles. How would you feel if throughout your long exile you dreamed of your glorious homecoming and your return to an orthodox way of life only to find resistance by those who were never exiled in the first place. How would you feel? What would you want to do about it? What would you think about those who resisted your efforts? Can you in any way relate to the longing for former days evident in this reading?
- ▶ Now imagine you are one of the ones left behind and you became very comfortable adapting to the new ways of the pagan culture. You had no intention of allowing a group who had been away for so long to come and dictate how you should live and worship God and behave on a day to day basis. How would you feel? What does this controversy have to teach us today in this time and in this culture?
- ▶ Why was it important for the returnees to insist on strict observance of the Jewish way of life? What could have happened if they had not done so? What is the lesson?
- ▶ Isaiah seems to promise the people that a return to their Jewish tradition is where they will find comfort and will prosper and find happiness. In what way does such a return from wayward ways a word of comfort and challenge in your life? In what way can we relate to his message today?
- ▶ What is the Good News in this reading?

Second Reading: Galatians 6, 14-18

- ▶ What is more important, the Law or the Gospel? The Galatians were poised to choose the former over the latter.
- ▶ Paul put it all in perspective for them. How can one turn one's back on the centerpiece of the Gospel--the cross of Jesus Christ?
- ▶ Paul warned the Galatians community not to be distracted by a legalistic approach to Judaism.
- ▶ Paul reminded them that through Christ they were freed from the Law. Strict legalistic adherence to the Law was a distraction.
- ▶ Christians were not required to observe the Law.
- ▶ The cross of Jesus-not circumcision is their sign of faith and hope.
- ▶ Paul was hardly impressed by his own circumcision—Paul's mark of fidelity was the cross of Christ.
- ▶ His focus was the suffering Jesus endured for our sake.
- ▶ Paul insisted that freedom from the Law means freedom for the Law—to go beyond the Law to love completely and offer ones' self for others—a total kenosis and self-emptying.
- ▶ The only focus worthy of our attention is the cross of Christ.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in groups of two and then surface brief insights in the wider group. Catechist responds with a “brief” story or reflection from his or her life. See appendix #2 for an example.

- ▶ What happens when we get caught up in a legalistic approach to faith? What are the dangers? Why do you suppose Paul so vigorously warned against rigid adherence to the Law? Was he suggesting that Christians did not have to follow the law?
- ▶ Why is Paul’s warning to the Galatians a word we need to hear today?
- ▶ What does it practically mean that Paul chooses the cross of Christ over the Law? How does that apply to your own life today?
- ▶ What does it mean to you when we are asked to take up our cross and follow Jesus? How are you presently taking up your cross in your own life today?
- ▶ How is this Good News for us today?

Gospel: Luke 10, 1-12. 17-20

Read or summarize the Gospel, perhaps provide a copy of the text for further reflection.

Gospel Exegesis

Please note: catechist may intersperse the questions at the end of the exegesis throughout your presentation where appropriate.) Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions before presenting the exegesis.

- ▶ What specifically touched you in this Gospel?
- ▶ What does this Gospel mean to you?

- ▶ Jesus sends the seventy-two out to proclaim the Good News. He sends the first evangelists.
- ▶ He sends them to proclaim news of the kingdom and of his coming—his eschatological return at the end of the world.
- ▶ This section of the scripture is known as the travel section. It prepares for the eventual mission to the Gentiles.
- ▶ The number seventy-two in the Greek Bible signifies the whole world—thus this mission represents God’s universal mission to the world—inclusive of all God’s people.
- ▶ Since the mission is to the whole world disciples are to pray that God will provide what is needed to accomplish so great a task—to bring in the harvest of souls.
- ▶ Luke told them what their mission should be—he gave them guidelines for accomplishing their missionary work.
- ▶ They were to completely rely on God to take care of them.
- ▶ Their task was urgent and required diligent focus—they were not to delay. The

reign of God was at hand and required their diligent proclamation.

- ▶ Disciples were to count on the benevolence and hospitality of God's people as they went forth.
- ▶ They were commanded not to worry about the food laws but to eat whatever food they were given.
- ▶ Their witness was two-fold—direct proclamation and the example of their lives.
- ▶ They were not going alone—Christ would be with them. Those who rejected them ultimately rejected Christ.
- ▶ As a sign of God's displeasure for rejection of their message, they were to shake the dust from their feet. Those who rejected God's message would face judgment.
- ▶ They were to go forth rejoicing with the knowledge that there is power in Jesus name to cast out the works of Satan and to heal and share the Good News with all who would listen.
- ▶ They could work miracles—but miracles were not to be their focus.
- ▶ The disciples were to take the shalom peace of God with them—evidence of the kingdom of God in their midst.
- ▶ Shalom is a sign of peace and harmony in the world that was intended at the creation of the world before sin took a foothold.
- ▶ Jesus' mission was to restore the peace intended for the world at its inception.
- ▶ After Jesus' resurrection peace is the first thing he offered to those he encountered.



Mystagogy

reflection on the mysteries

Catechist invites participants to respond to one or more of the following questions in small groups of four. Use the last three or four minutes to surface the insights in the wider group. Catechist begins by sharing story from his or her life. See appendix #3 for an example. (@ Ten-twelve minutes)

- ▶ What are the primary themes in this Gospel?
- ▶ Imagine the faith it took to go blindly out in the world with nothing but the Good News and relying on the goodness of others. Their faith in Christ must have been unshakeable. Who has similar faith today? Who are the evangelists in our world that live according to the principles in this Gospel? What do they have to teach us today?
- ▶ What are the implications of Jesus' instructions to his disciples? What does it tell us about how we are to go about bringing people to Christ?
- ▶ Why all the urgency?
- ▶ Is there similar urgency for us? If so, why? How, then should we go out into the world as the seventy-two were instructed to go—how might we apply Jesus' instructions to our lives today?
- ▶ In what way are you presently living according to the commands in this Gospel? If not, what can you do to more fully live today's Gospel?

- ▶ What does this Gospel teach us about the Christian mission?

Catechist invites participants to silently reflect on the following question.

- ▶ After reflection on today's liturgy, what one thing is God asking of you at this time in your life?
- ▶ What obstacles stand in the way of following God's call?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Repeat OPENING PRAYER for this session OR

Minor rite: Blessing: 95-97.

APPENDIX

#1. This reading is a great comfort to those who have strayed from their faith mooring. What is the Jerusalem that I am called to long for and return to? I can attend Mass every Sunday and still stray in my heart, still lose my connection to Jerusalem-- to the Tradition.

Isaiah reminds us where our faithful anchor lies and why we need the Tradition. It is the Mother that nurtures and comforts us. It is the realization of God's providential care for us. So often I am challenged in the liturgy to get back to basics—to simply focus my attention on my relationship with God in Christ and not get so caught up in all the distracting issues of our day that vie for my attention. Today is such a liturgy. Isaiah reminds me to renew my appreciation for the Tradition I so love in spite of the frustrations and the sin I sometimes encounter.

There was once a time in my life when the parish I was involved in was experiencing serious upheaval. It was difficult being not only a parishioner but a Catholic as well. The abuse scandal was just picking up steam, and I was dealing with someone very close to me who had just revealed their own sexual abuse. There was a huge division in the parish that created cliques and camps. And the parish experienced a scandal involving a member of the community. The parish was a focus of newspaper headlines for a considerable length of time.

I remember a catechumen sharing with us that she was seriously asking herself if she wanted to be part of such a community. She decided that she very much did want to be part of the community for the Church is so much bigger and more meaningful than the scandals that were tearing us apart at the time. She could not conceive leaving the Mother who offered her life, compassion and nurture within her protective embrace.

I too was experiencing serious frustration, doubt and questioning. After a great deal of prayer, deep within that God-place, I heard the word that sustained me: "Keep your eyes on Jesus Christ crucified and risen and do not get caught up in the transitory things of this world." When I lost focus and concentrated instead on the chaos I also lost my peace.

We are called to keep our eyes on Christ and to worship him in Spirit and Truth. I believe that is best accomplished within the borders of this place I call home—the Catholic Church. I may sometimes wander in my heart, but it would take wild horses to drive me away. The returning Babylonian exiles knew what they were trying to safeguard--it was too important to lose!

#2. Paul is trying to teach us that the Law cannot save us; we are saved only through the cross of Christ. What that means in our lives today is a commitment to embrace the cross—to join the sorrows and the joys of our lives to the cross of Christ and thus participate in the ongoing redemption of the world which is promised by our Church.

In my own life the extent to which I am able to turn over the events of my life—the

sorrows and the joys—and abandon it all to the cross of Christ, is the extent to which I find the deepest meaning in my life. It is one thing to suffer the horrors of living with a mentally ill family member, it is quite another to offer this suffering up to Christ not only for my child but for other families who believe God has abandoned them in this disease. Thus, do I participate in the cross of Christ—my focus becomes the Paschal Mystery of Christ and not on the transitory suffering of this world.

#3. Jesus sent out the seventy-two. Sometimes I too am sent out to the wider church. It is a great privilege. I have never had to shake the dust from my feet, but once I came close. In my travels I have been amazingly uplifted by the faith of God's people. I am fortunate to always be preaching to the converted.

Only once have I ever experienced a time when I felt like shaking the dust from my feet as a result of rejection similar to the rejection Jesus instructed his disciples about in today's Gospel. Our task was to present a new paradigm of specific ministry with a specific group of people. Most people in attendance were open to what we presented and embraced it with enthusiasm.

Several, however, came to the situation with suspicion, anger, and centuries old intolerance. I remember thinking of this Gospel throughout those few days. Most people reached out to us in hospitality and welcome. The several who were antagonistic made our work of evangelization very difficult—not only for us—but for those who wanted to hear and wanted to be open to what we were saying.

Had we dust under our feet we would have shaken it until the ground rumbled. The lesson was a reminder that it is nearly impossible to break through stone-cold hearts. We do our best and then move on—we allow God to move the mountain of stone if they can be moved and not waste precious time trying to break through the impenetrable.

What is important is that we are called to go out and do the work of building the kingdom of God. We cannot be thwarted by naysayers and those who would distract us from this very important work.



Connecting Liturgy with Catholic Doctrine

Possible doctrinal themes that flow from this week's
Liturgy of the Word and Eucharist

Evangelization
Baptism
Kingdom of God
Jesus Christ
Miracles

Prayer
Cross of Jesus Christ
Ecumenism
Eucharist Series

Other themes may be chosen as well--choose from the scope and sequence chart and create your own connecting statement. The following statements make the appropriate connections between the doctrinal issue you have chosen and the liturgy of the day.

EVANGELIZATION

Jesus sends his disciples out to preach the Kingdom of God. He gives them instructions for this very important missionary work. Today is a most appropriate time to focus our attention on what the Church teaches about EVANGELIZATION.

BAPTISM

If Jesus is sending the seventy two out to proclaim the kingdom they must be ready to bring those they meet into the fold of Christianity. Thus, they would be baptizing people along the way throughout their journey. For that reason, today would be an appropriate time to focus our attention on the sacrament of BAPTISM.

KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus came to establish the kingdom. Today he tells his disciples to go out and establish that kingdom—to tell the world about it. He reminds them that the road is not easy. He reminds them that they too will be rejected. Those who are called to establish the reign of God are to follow the example of Jesus. They are to detach from worldly concerns and consider the kingdom of God their top priority. This section of Luke's Gospel focuses on Jesus' mission to establish the reign of God. Today's doctrinal session will focus on the KINGDOM OF GOD.

JESUS CHRIST

The focus of this evangelistic effort is Jesus Christ and his mission to the world. Each Sunday would be an appropriate time to reflect on Jesus the Christ. Thus, today our extended session will be on JESUS CHRIST.

MIRACLES

Even though miracles are not to be a primary focus of the disciples as they go forward, they nevertheless were given the power of Jesus to perform such miracles. Miracles were considered a sign of God's kingdom. The disciples were being sent to establish that kingdom in the world. Thus, it is most appropriate that today we focus our attention on MIRACLES.

PRAYER

Jesus reminds his disciples that union with him is their top priority. No mission is good without the power of prayer. The disciples are exhorted to go forth with Jesus' name on their lips—that is called prayer. Today would be an appropriate time to focus our attention on PRAYER.

CROSS OF JESUS

St. Paul reminds the Galatians that their only cause for boasting is the cross of Jesus Christ. We are exhorted to take up our cross and follow Jesus. Today would be a most appropriate time to focus our attention on the CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST.

ECUMENISM

Jesus is sending his disciples out to establish the kingdom of God. We are to continue that mission today. Part of Jesus' mission requires that we join forces with other Christians to work in unity to establish the reign of God. It is thus important that we understand what the Church teaches us about ecumenism—how we approach other non-Catholic religions. Thus, today's extended session will focus on Church teaching regarding ECUMENISM.

EUCCHARIST SERIES:

Our premier celebration of the Paschal Mystery—the life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension sending of the Spirit is made manifest and re-presented for us in the Eucharistic liturgy. Today we will focus on part ____ of the Eucharistic Series.